Lafayette Historical Society NEWS
Enlightening Our Community

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Please join us for Lafayette Historical Society's First Speaker Series Presentation of 2013!

Lafayette Historical Society's Speaker Series

The History of Diablo State Park

Wednesday, **February 13, 2013** ~ 3:00 p.m.

Speaker: **Dr. John Gallagher**, Chairman
Stewardship Committee, Mt. Diablo Board of Directors

Community Hall ~ Lafayette Library and Learning Center

Donation requested ~ **$10** LHS Members; **$15** for Non-Members
Kids under 14 **free** with paying adult

Please call LHS (925) 283-1848 or email Lafayette.history@comcast.net
for additional information or reservations

Dr. Gallagher will speak to us about the history of one of the most remarkable landmarks in our region.

Mount Diablo is an isolated peak of 3,864 feet (1,178 m), visible from most of the San Francisco Bay Area and much of northern California. Mount Diablo appears to be a double pyramid. North Peak is the second half of the pyramid and is nearly as high in elevation at 3,557 feet (1,084 m). While it may appear close it is about one mile northeast of the main summit. *

Mount Diablo

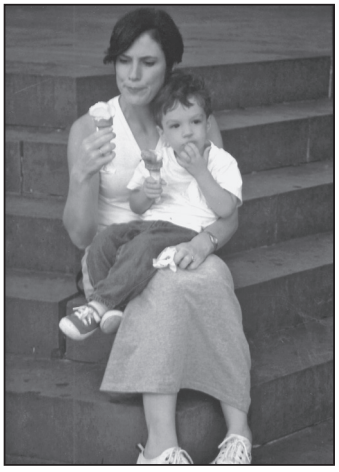
The peak is the centerpiece of Mount Diablo State Park, a state park of about 20,000 acres. The park was the first public open space of a complex which now includes 38 preserves, including nearby city open spaces, regional parks and watersheds. Private lands protected with conservation easements buffer some areas. Preserved lands on and around Mount Diablo now total more than 90,000 acres. *

President's Message

Happy 2013!! All of us at the **Historical Society** hope you had a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to bringing you more interesting programming in the new year. Our first program will shed some light on a local landmark and the next speaker is sure to shake you up!

Our 2013 Speakers Series kicks off on **February 13**, when **Dr. John Gallagher** will speak on the History of Diablo State Park. The program will be at *3 pm in the Community Hall*. If you attended the **December Pearl Harbor** program, you may remember that **Dr. Gallagher** spoke briefly about the *Mt. Diablo Beacon* that is lit every **December 7th**. Come to our February program to learn more about this East Bay landmark.

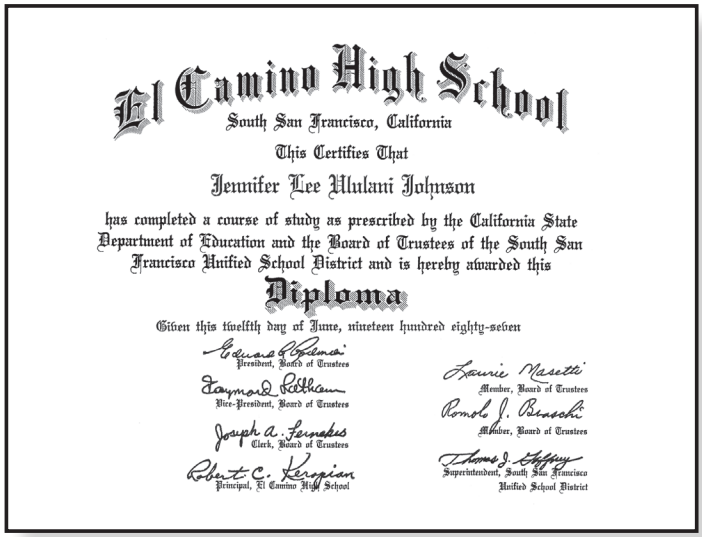
Our **Annual Pot Luck** on *Thursday,* **May 16**, will feature **Richard Schwartz**, who will speak on the **October 21, 1868, Hayward Earthquake**, the largest earthquake unleashed by the Hayward fault. **Schwartz** will share stories, photos and illustrations to accompany the history of what happened in the Bay Area before, during, and after the earthquake. We hope all you movers and shakers will join us for dinner and this program.



Italian Vacation

A Happy Ending - One of our group's favorite activities is tracking down historical mysteries. About nine years ago one of our members, **Mary Solon**, found a slide carousel filled with slides near what is now the CVS Pharmacy. Mary looked at the slides, hoping to recognize anyone in the Italian vacation photos, so they could be returned to the owner. Those efforts were in vain. The carousel has remained with the **Historical Society** until this year when one of our members, **Judie Peterson,** decided to try again to reunite the slides and the owner. **Amanda Brand** wrote an article accompanied by a photo for ***Lafayette Today*** and someone recognized the woman and boy in the photo. It turns out that when the owner of the slides moved from Lafayette to Danville, the slides and carousel were lost and then forgotten. Now they have been reunited.

The newest mystery to be solved is that of the red high school diploma which appeared in a bag of donated books at the **Friends Book Shop**. If you know the whereabouts of **Jennifer Lee Ululani Johnson** who graduated from **El Camino High School** in South San Francisco in 1987, please let us know so we can return her diploma to her.

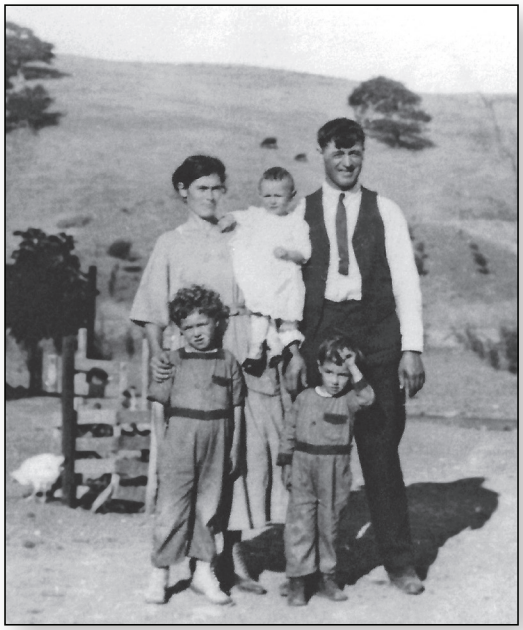


El Camino High School
South San Francisco, California
This Certifies That
Jennifer Lee Ululani Johnson
has completed a course of study as prescribed by the California State Department of Education and the Board of Trustees of the South San Francisco Unified School District and is hereby awarded this
Diploma
Given this twelfth day of June, nineteen hundred eighty-seven
President, Board of Trustees
Vice-President, Board of Trustees
Clerk, Board of Trustees
Principal, El Camino High School
Member, Board of Trustees
Member, Board of Trustees
Superintendent, South San Francisco Unified School District

Also please read about two more of our wonderful **LHS volunteers**, **Sherril Barber** and **Ruth Bailey. Ruth** is also on the **LHS Board**. They help organize our materials and keep the doors of the **History Room** open. We are so lucky to have such a wonderful group of volunteers.

—Mary McCosker

The Rossi Story



Rossi Family—1922 Serafino and Mary with children Frank, Serafine and Angelo in his mother's arms.

Volunteers at the **Lafayette Historical Society** know history is around every corner, sometimes quite literally. Take ***Rossi and Angelo Streets*** in Lafayette. Some citizens might be familiar with the immigrant pioneer Rossi family, but ***Angelo Street*** owes its name to a son of the Rossi clan, named, what else, **Angelo Rossi**. The history behind these streets is one of the premiere families in Lafayette history.

Angelo's family story is a classic tale of hard work and success in blossoming California. His father, **Serafino Rossi**, made his way to California from Giustina, Italy, in 1906 after his older brother **Tony** had earned enough money washing windows in Oakland to send for his brother. After a year of work at a candy factory, **Serafino** learned of another Italian immigrant, **Joseph Ghiglione**, who had land in the Happy Valley area. **Serafino** made the move to help **Ghiglione** work his land.

After two years of working for **Ghiglione**, **Serafino** moved to Reliez Valley and became one of three families living in the area. He built a house for about $100 on neighbor **Ed Rowland's** land near where Springhill School now stands and share-cropped for **Rowland**. **Serafino** saved money to buy acreage a few parcels at a time, and eventually his estate was comprised of 152 acres growing corn, tomatoes, potatoes, pears and peaches, and boasted a three room house with indoor plumbing. It also boasted his new charming wife, **Mary**, whom he married in 1916.

Angelo and Gloria Rossi - 2007

Serafino continued farming and in time he and **Mary** had three children, **Frank, Serafine** and **Angelo**. The family sold produce in Oakland, only reachable after a 4 or 5-hour journey up Fish Ranch Road or through the very narrow, recently opened tunnel. Avoiding wildlife such a coyotes, which **Serafino** recalls deterring with his rifle, the family became well known in the area for their sugary pears and heads of beef raised by **Mary**.

All three children attended area schools, and **Angelo** graduated from **Acalanes High** in 1941. Drafted into the ***27th Infantry Division*** during World War II, **Angelo** courted his future wife **Gloria** - whom he met at a Frank Sinatra show at the Sweets Ballroom in Oakland - via letters for the entire 3 ½ years of his deployment.

Angelo returned to his family in Lafayette after he received a *Bronze Star* and 2 *Purple Hearts*, married **Gloria** and moved into the house they were to occupy for 56 years. **Serafino**, meanwhile, stopped farming and opened a furniture store, which was staffed by his sons. The store stood for almost 30 years on Mt. Diablo Blvd near where the Park Hotel stands and featured handcrafted furniture by the **Rossi** family.

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Meet Our Board and Volunteers

History Room Volunteers - Ruth Bailey and Sherril Barber

Sherril Barber

Sherril was raised in Lafayette and went through her school years in local schools. She studied at San Jose State where she received her California teaching credential. She returned to Lafayette and worked in special education in the *Lafayette and Acalanes High School District schools*. She retired from the *Acalanes High School District* 50 years after she graduated from Acalanes High School.

Having grown up in Lafayette she has always been interested in history, especially Lafayette history. She loves volunteering and working for the **Historical Society** doing a variety of special projects. **LHS** is fortunate to be a recipient of her time and talents.

Sherril has two sons and is the grandmother of four, the oldest is 20 years old, the youngest is 20 months. One of her sons lives in the family home in Lafayette.

Sherril loves to quilt and belongs to two quilting groups: one group makes quilts for personal use and the other makes quilts for the *Bay Area Crisis Nursery*. She is in charge of weekly flower arrangements for the sanctuary at the *Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church*. She is a member of *Assistance League* and works as a back room volunteer at their shop in the *Wayside Inn*. She loves spending time with her grandchildren who live in Lafayette and in Northern California. **Sherril** enjoys reading, cooking and travelling in California and is a member of *Questers* and is also a member of the *California Cookie Cutter Collecter's Club*.

Ruth Bailey

Ruth is a native of Ohio where she lived for her first 19 years of life. Her first brush with history was on a fifth grade field trip to the Akron home of Abolitionist **John Brown**. To know that she was walking through the rooms where he lived fascinated her….she was hooked for life on history, and has since visited many presidents' homes and historic sites in the East and Midwest.

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The Rossi Story

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Eventually, **Serafino** began a reversal of his initial purchase of his estate and began to parcel out acres to developers. While the **Rossi** homes on *Reliez Valley Road* and *Hilltop* are still occupied, they are no longer in the **Rossi** family. However, both **Rossi** and **Angelo** streets proudly bear the names of the hard working family who helped settle the Reliez Valley area and make Lafayette the beautiful, well-known town it is today.

2013-2014 Board of Directors

President: ..... Mary McCosker

Vice President: ..... Marechal Duncan

Treasurer: .....Judie Peterson

Recording Secretary: ..... Nancy Flood

Corresponding Secretary: ..... Oliver Hamlin

Ruth Bailey

John Otto

Laura Torkelson

Michael Troutman

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Contact Us: ..... History Room – 283-1848

– or – lafayette.history@comcast.net

Meet Our Board and Volunteers

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Ruth graduated from Denison University in Ohio with a degree in English Lit. After college she moved to Chicago and worked for AT&T (then Illinois Bell). She was the first woman in the 22-company Bell System named as editor of the internal/external corporate magazine, which was considered a "man's job". She left Chicago in 1970 and moved with her husband to Sacramento. In 1976 she moved to Lafayette and when her daughter started school went to work at John F. Kennedy University, eventually becoming executive assistant to the president. In 1988 she went to work for WestAmerica Bank and two years later moved to the Bank of California. Her best assignment there was the creation of a museum highlighting the history of the bank. This job fed her interest in California and western history and taught her something about museum protocols.

She retired in 2000 and has since divided her time between travel, playing bridge, and various volunteer activities, particularly with the *Friends of the Lafayette Library* and the *Historical Society*. She works in the backroom of the *Friend's Book Shop* sorting and pricing donated books and is also on the *Board of the Friends*. She also serves as Lafayette's alternate *County Library Commissioner.*

Ruth enjoys her semi-weekly shifts in the *History Room* because she supports the **LHS** mission of preserving and publicizing Lafayette's history and helping interested visitors discover their heritage. It delights **Ruth** to know that Lafayette was occasionally on the Pony Express route. If she had lived here in those times she would have insisted on a sign down at the corner saying "**The Buckaroo Stops Here!**"

Now is the time to renew your Annual Membership or consider an annual donation. Your support helps maintain our *History Room* and the important artifacts and archives.

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549
www.LafayetteHistory.org

Return Service Requested

Lafayette Historical Society Membership Application

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City-Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Categories and Annual Dues

(Please check one)

- ❑ Student Membership $10.00
- ❑ Individual Membership $25.00
- ❑ Family Membership $50.00
- ❑ Sponsor Membership $500.00

Please indicate areas of special interest

- ❑ Publicity
- ❑ Research-Genealogy
- ❑ Telephoning
- ❑ Displays
- ❑ Oral Histories
- ❑ History Room
- ❑ Data Base Entry of Photos
- ❑ Photo Collection
- ❑ News Clippings
- ❑ Fire Engine
- ❑ Walking Tours-Outreach
- ❑ Other_____

Please mail this application to:

Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, CA 94549